

The vocation of the Church can be summed up in the special understanding it has of *remembering*. One of the ancient names for the Mass - which is what makes the Church every day - is the Greek word *anamnesis*. This is a double negative - meaning *not-forgetting*. Some of the Church's feasts come embedded in the liturgical setting of the cycle of Jesus' life. This long story-telling cycle, which starts in Advent and Christmas, and passes through the drama of Easter and Pentecost to the triumph of Christ the King, is simply another form of anamnesis - *calling to mind* the story of the Lord.

Today we apply this special faculty of remembering to the people who have lived and died before us. As with the remembrance of the Lord, we do this in vivid and often convulsive ways, most clearly when we celebrate the funeral liturgy for one of them. But on this day we come more peacefully, and lift our eyes a little higher than we can in the throes of grief and shock which can afflict us on those days. We remember in the way Christians do: by lifting up our memories to God. When we bring them to God, they are suffused with his light and embraced in his wisdom. He shows us how our lives - even if they have appeared to be afflicted and senseless in the living - are part of the great story which ends in our admission into his joy.

We should make sure today, then, that our remembrance is worthy of its destination: worthy to be offered to God. We should draw no limits to it, cleansing it of selfishness; we must remember those we have loved without reserve, and equally those who gave us hardship or pain. We should remember that there are many of the departed towards whom we stand indebted: for forgiveness refused, for affection denied, for goodness we never acknowledged. Today is a day to surrender these unpayable debts to the mercy of the Father, whose power can heal all ills. We should also bring to God today whatever has died of what he has created in us. The relationships for which he designs us are so often frustrated and prevented by our short understanding and failure to give. We are ourselves, as Jesus said, *unmarked graves which people tread on without knowing*. There is a meeting with Jesus in a garden, which we mark with joy on the morning of Easter; but on this autumnal day also there is a meeting with Jesus beside the grave that is within us. He may call us as he called Lazarus, and we may come obediently to life.

Then we have an offering to make to the Father of a life renewed and cleansed, to be taken up into the offering of Jesus, full of suffering, bearing the wounds of the world, but destined to be glorified by the re-creating, eternal love that made it. And all the communion we long for, with the uncountable members of the risen body of the Lord, will be opened to us in a promise that will not deceive us, a promise of joy that will surpass and outshine all that we could imagine in this limited light.

May God bring us to love all that he loves, and to know all that he knows, and to see with his eternal gaze all that he has promised us, in the sharing of his glory.